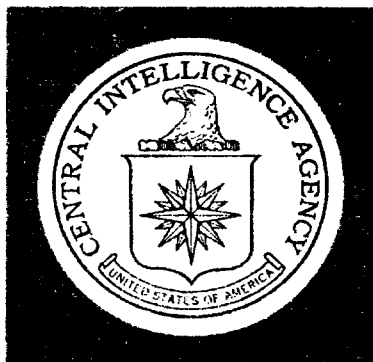


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

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DATE: AUG 2001

Intelligence Memorandum

North Korea's Military Forces

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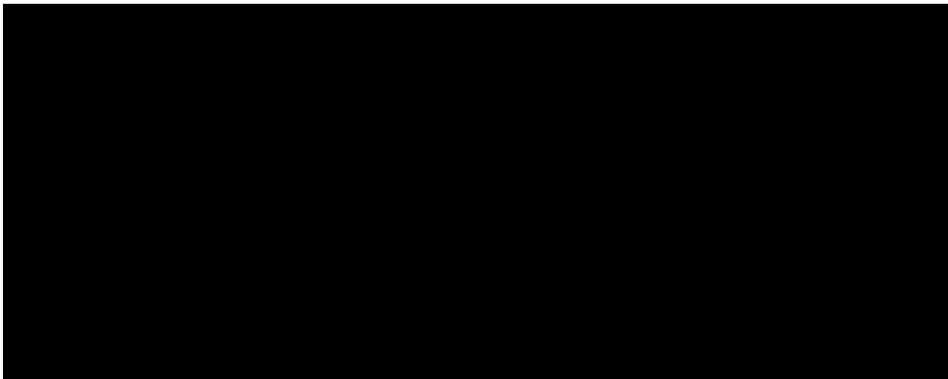
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

North Korea's Military Forces

Summary

The armed forces of North Korea have the manpower, training, and equipment to defend the country against its only immediate threat, South Korea, and to mount limited offensive operations.

The army is smaller than South Korea's, but has superior firepower and strong defensive positions along the Demilitarized Zone. The air force has been receiving modern Soviet fighters and--with nearly 500 jets--significantly outmatches its South Korean counterpart. The small North Korean navy is largely restricted to a coastal defense role, with Soviet-supplied guided-missile patrol boats and torpedo-attack submarines providing its major punch.

The North Koreans get most of their modern military equipment from the USSR. They produce some small arms and mortars and also receive limited amounts of equipment from Communist China.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research and coordinated with the Offices of Current Intelligence and Scientific Intelligence.

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General

1. North Korea's military forces total about 373,000, around 4 percent of the population. This level has been maintained despite the country's chronic manpower shortage, a major limiting factor on economic development. Military units probably are being maintained at or near full authorized strength levels. There is no known capability for immediate expansion of these forces except by augmentation with personnel from the paramilitary forces and mobilization of the limited reserves.

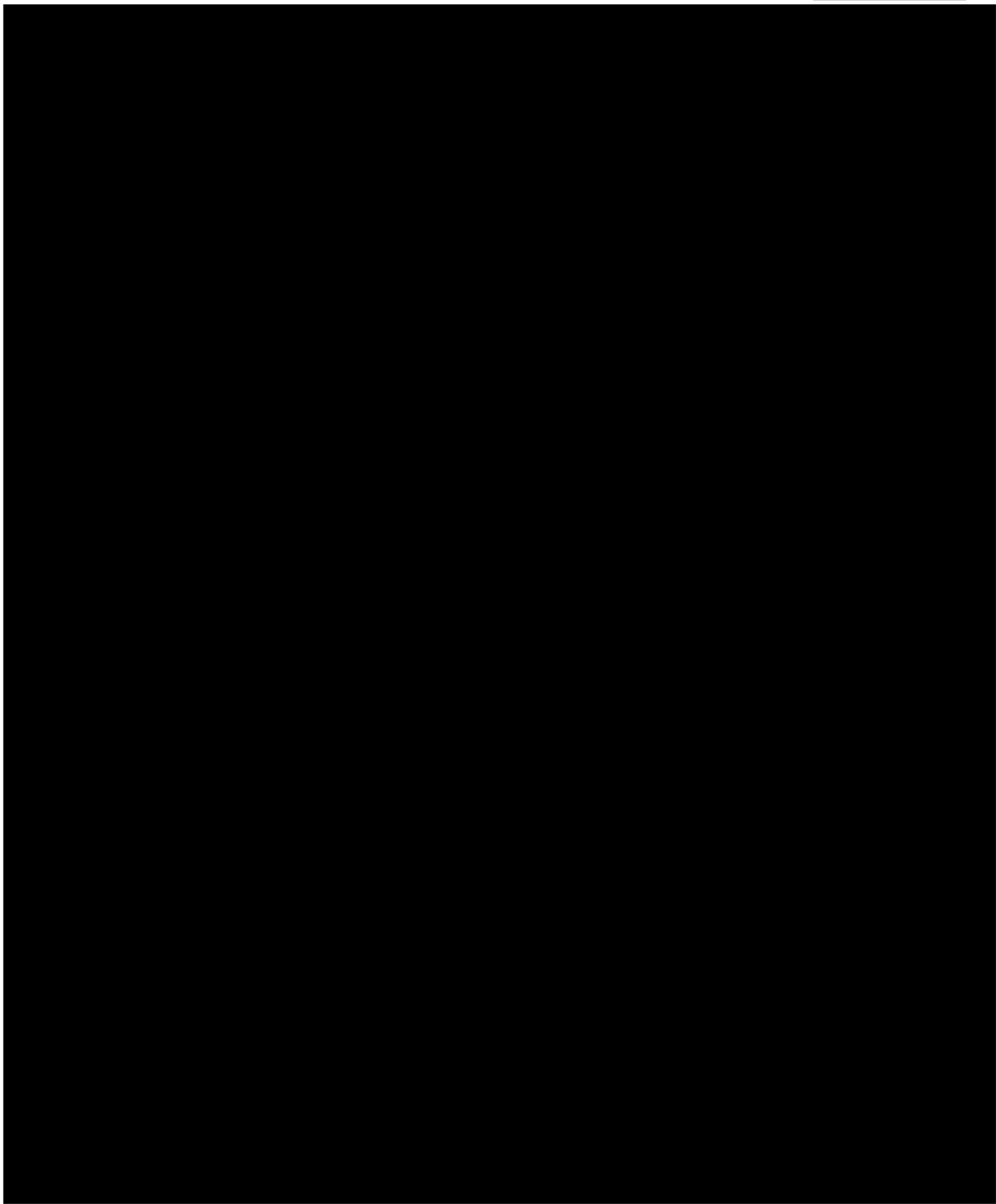
2. North Korea depends on Soviet armament and equipment to maintain and increase its inventory of modern weapons, although it can produce some Soviet small arms in limited quantities, crew-served weapons up to the 120-mm mortar, ammunition for these weapons, and motor vehicles and tank parts. The North Koreans have also begun to design and produce their own small naval patrol craft. Communications equipment factories in North Korea can fabricate a limited range of simple electronics gear. Communist China supplies some equipment.

The Army

3. The North Korean army totals 345,000 men, organized into 19 infantry divisions, a tank division, and five infantry brigades which are equivalent to divisions. The army has 430 tanks and 450 assault guns. Its primary mission is defense of the Korean peninsula, and most of the units are deployed along the Demilitarized Zone. (See ground forces map, opposite page.)

4. The army has been re-equipping with more modern Soviet arms. Since the Korean armistice, firepower has been increased in all army units, particularly in the infantry where antitank battalions have been added and separate rocket companies have been attached to infantry regiments. The addition of 85-mm guns has increased the firepower of the antiaircraft batteries. Airborne training has received greater attention and a parachute battalion has been organized.

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5. During 1966 the army underwent a major reorganization, in which corps headquarters were eliminated and five army groups created. This force structure enables each army group to execute independent tactical missions.

The Air Force

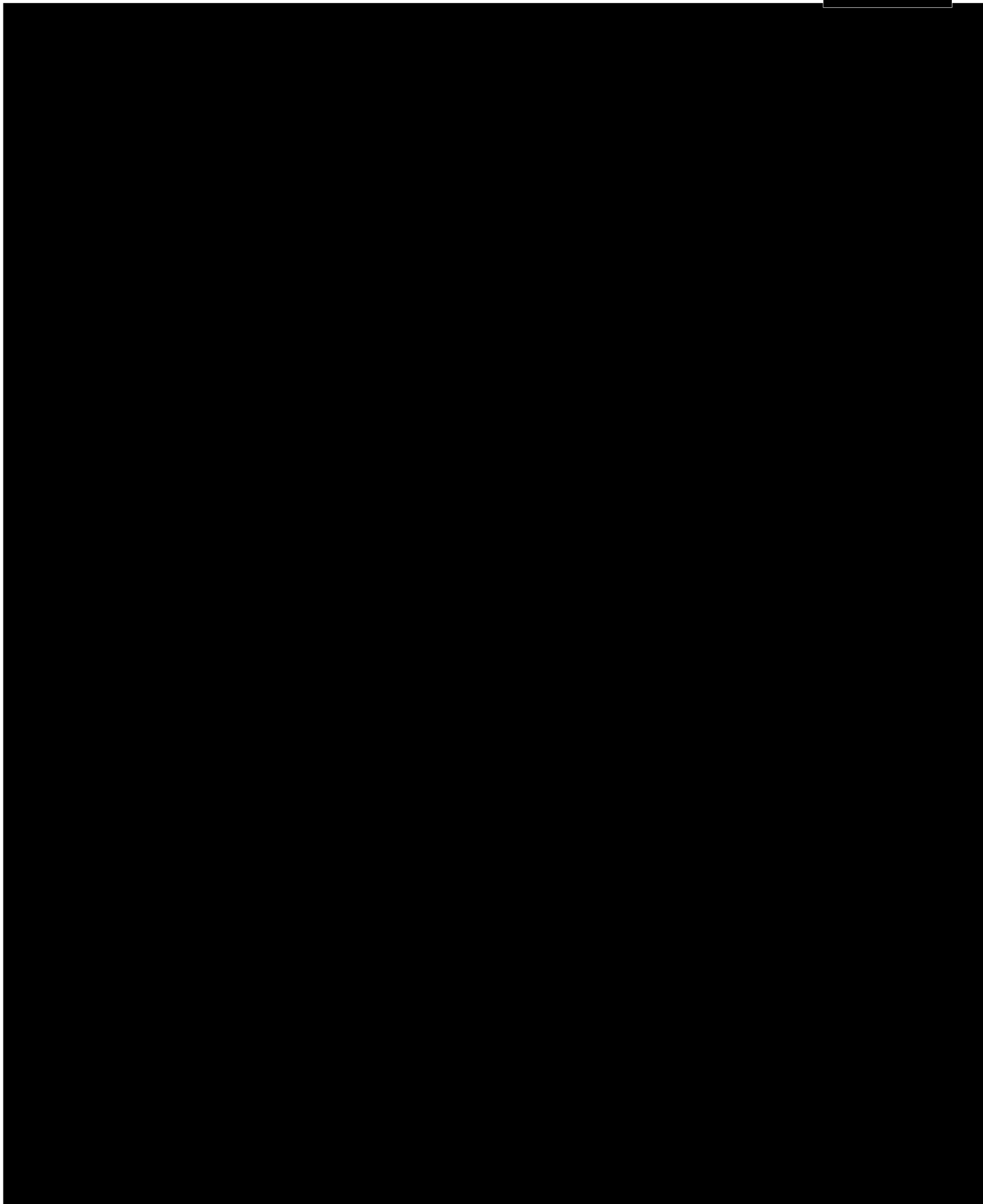
6. The North Korean air force has 18,500 personnel and over 650 aircraft. It is organized into four fighter divisions, two independent bomber regiments, an air transport battalion, a Civil Air Bureau, and an air school. Its forces are stationed on the 13 active airfields in North Korea. (See air defense map, opposite page.) Two additional airfields have recently become operational but do not yet have assigned units. The aircraft inventory includes about 70 MIG-19 Farmer and MIG-21 Fishbed fighters, more than 400 MIG-15 Fagots and MIG-17 Frescos, and 80 IL-28 Beagle jet light bombers. There are also about 60 transports, 34 piston trainers, and a dozen MI-4 Hound and three new MI-8 Hip helicopters.

7. The primary mission of the North Korean air force is air defense of the mainland and coastal waters. It also supports the ground forces and can conduct bombing missions into South Korea or offshore. Since 1965 the air force has been conducting extensive training, concentrating on mobility exercises, the development of intercept techniques against US reconnaissance aircraft off the coasts, and the firing of air-to-air missiles.

8. The air force is heavily dependent on continuing outside support to maintain its effectiveness. The majority of its equipment--including the combat aircraft--is of Soviet origin, and much of the technical training is provided in Soviet schools. North Korea also depends on the USSR for spare parts and POL supplies. China provides some equipment, such as AN-2 Colt light transports.

9. The North Korean air defense system is being improved with the activation of more surface-to-air

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missile units, bringing the total to 14 sites in two clusters around the industrial-military complexes on the east and west coasts. The USSR will probably provide additional units to strengthen the existing defenses and extend the coverage to other areas. The acquisition of modern Soviet radar has increased North Korean intercept capabilities by improving early warning, ground-controlled intercept, and height-finding capabilities.

The Navy

10. The North Korean navy is a small coastal defense force with about 10,000 personnel manning 200 vessels. Most of the ships, including the larger and more modern units, are based on the east coast facing the Sea of Japan. (See naval map, opposite page.)

11. At present the navy operates four W-class torpedo-attack submarines, eight Komar guided-missile patrol boats, nine subchasers, 40 torpedo boats, and about 140 miscellaneous units including gunboats, minesweepers, and service and supply vessels. The submarines were received from the USSR beginning in 1963. Four Komars were first noted in 1966, and the Soviets probably delivered an additional four in 1967.

12. Recently the North Koreans received at least two Shershen-class units, the latest Soviet fast patrol torpedo boat. This delivery indicates that the USSR continues to provide modern equipment to the North Korean navy as well as to the army and air force. The North Koreans have also begun modernizing their older patrol craft in addition to designing and building their own.

13. The navy operates from four main bases and eight subsidiary stations divided between the two coasts. A new base for the Komar boats was recently constructed north of Wonsan on the east coast. This base includes docking facilities and a missile support

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area. A nearby sea-level tunnel probably leads to an underground dock large enough for Komar boats.

14. The North Korean navy has only a limited offensive capability. Its Komar boats pack the main punch and are capable of limited offensive operations in the Sea of Japan. The crews of the submarines, however, are probably not well enough trained to conduct sizable offensive operations, and the navy's antisubmarine warfare capabilities are limited.

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February 1968

<u>Military Forces</u>	<u>North Korea</u>	<u>South Korea</u>
Army	345,000 men	534,000 men (plus 50,000 in South Vietnam)
Marines		31,000 men
US Forces		48,000 men (2 in- fantry divisions)
Navy	10,000 men	18,000 men
Submarines	4 W-class	
Guided-missile boats	8 Komar-class	
Fast patrol boats (torpedo)	2 Shershen-class	
Destroyer/destroyer escorts		4
Torpedo boats	40	
Subchasers	9	
Patrol boats	7	32
Motor gunboats	5	
Minesweepers	5	11
Amphibious craft		133
Miscellaneous	over 120	about 90
Air	18,500 men	25,500 men
Total jet fighters	488	192*
Modern fighters	27 MIG-21 7 MIG-19 34 MIG-19/21	57 F-5 A/B
Older fighters	62 MIG-17 358 MIG-15/17	30 F-86D 105 F-86F
Jet light bombers	80 IL-28	
Training or support aircraft	110	

*Plus several hundred US land- and carrier-based aircraft temporarily deployed following the seizure of the USS Pueblo.

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